

RANDOM THOUGHTS

Sam S. Abujawdeh
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COME WHAT MAY

DEDICATED TO MY CHILDREN,

MINERVA, SAMMY, SANDRA AND

JENNIFER,

WHO ARE ALWAYS IN MY

THOUGHTS



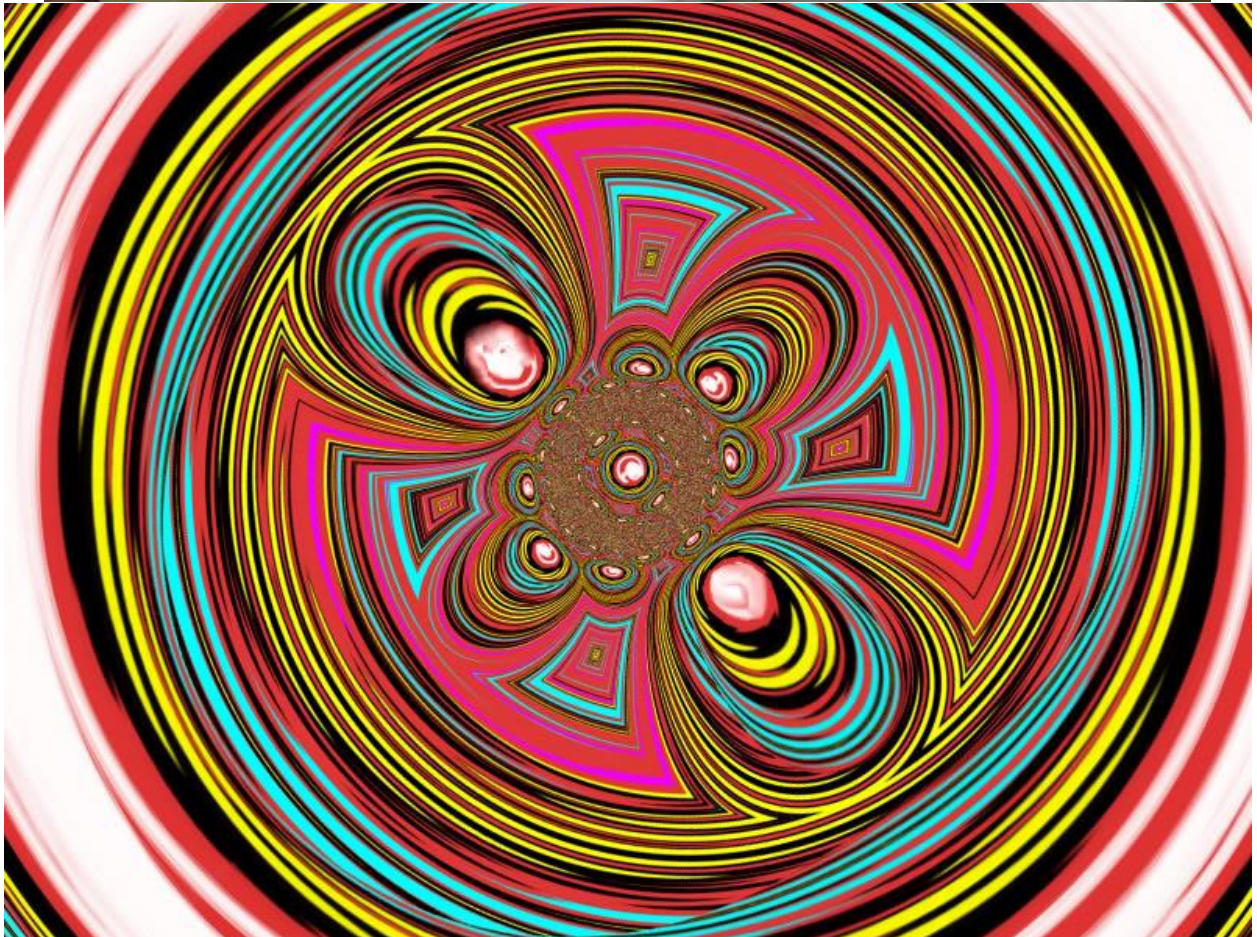
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PROLOGUE

Quiet as interstellar space, violent as a Quasar, such are the moods of my mind. No peaceful breeze in between.

Much has been learnt, more unlearnt and forgotten. Bright moments when all is clear and purposeful, turn despondent in an instance.

Perhaps it is the Ying and Yang of thought, perhaps that is the way of the world.

In Prose and rhyme, a walk through Life, Love and beauty. In this loose collection I capture some of those moments, so perhaps a time may come to make coherent what seems now random.

Or perhaps, their beauty is in their chaos, in their capacity to surprise.

My favorite flower, hibiscus Red, is a gorgeous Chandelier. Not planted, not bought, not planned. Its root did spread and there it was, from tumbled soil or accidental seed, surprised us all. And yet it is the joy of all, that stop to wonder and adore. From chaos beauty grows.

Tread along with me, perhaps to leave me half-way stranded in my quagmire, perhaps to cross the boggs together.

Welcome to my Mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is a summary of thoughts and experiences over a lifetime, enriched by friendships and relations that have made it interesting and made this writing worthwhile.

Special thanks go to my family, whose lives and love recreate new worlds for me every day.

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Any foolishness remaining is of course my own 😊.

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GENTLE SOULS

LOVING KIN

I ache with every passing of the days, as loving kin depart, and love is lost to Death's un-ending chain.

The Aunts that held us young and cared and kissed; that cried with joy at our return; that asked repeated questions in simple wonder, just to hear us talk.

The Uncles that bragged of us and held us high, that called us briefly and mainly to ensure all's well, yet watched with soft eyes our progress lest we fall.

The relatives who looked to village kin they missed, to familiar faces they ached for, to the long nights now spent far apart.

And most of all to Mom, that love-in-waiting that never ebbs, that cried for her immigrant sons, and suffered life's pains awaiting their smiling return.

Moments you can never get back. Love that cannot be repaid. Crying will not amend the wrongs, or hasten the return.

So take the moment now and seize the day. Some remain, their hearts awaiting your flood, to quench the loving thirst.

Make up for lost love with love still fresh, and grow new love with generations that rise, so the chain remains unbroken, and the blood ties remain strong.

Ignore the minor folly, for we all suffer the ridicule of fate. Close your eyes to perceived slight and passing jabber, for what is beneath is buried Gold, that dust cannot destroy.

Love thy neighbor, love thy family, and thereby love yourself.

I've known a few, but just a few.

Those that stand for Right, with no greed or fear of Might.

Neighbors, straight as an arrow, who pay their share and Share when they can.

Who sing in Choirs, Drive the Sick, collect for Mercy, and Hail a pleasant "Good Morn". I miss you Neal Scheve.

They do it not because it is illegal otherwise, or scared of Might and Power. They do it not because of shame or pride. They do it because it is Right.

Most are Older now, remnants of a culture and time when Morality still stood, and Family and Values reigned in many parts.

No wavering self-purpose or quick scheme attracts them. No vacillating morals that accept all, right or wrong. No "It's their Culture" excuses or "It's not their Fault" hedging.

Sundays dressed in their best, to Church and Community. Family Dinners with all together, respecting old, loving young, and caring for each other.

I see them pass away in silence, sad at the world left behind. For us, no new Standard Bearers come forth to keep the faith or lead the Charge.

I fear a future without them. I fear a future with traders and negotiators, hedonists and me-me-me promoters. I fear a neighbor that will not look across the Lawn on a brisk morning, and wave a hearty Hello, but scramble in his convertible to his latest deal or tryst.

They say they remain in Rural realms and quieter places, and perhaps that is where I belong. It is where I came from, and where perhaps I fit best.

The World is Too Much with us... Wordsworth was Right even then.

A living saint I knew, that now resides above.

A village priest, a homely soul, clad in weathered cloth and simple garb, walking the fields and byways.

His Church allowance he gave back, no money did he seek.

The priestly home he also gave, to older sisters needing it more.

And for his abode, chose a hut in the forest, where he planted his daily food, and kindled fires to keep away the bitter cold.

When he met youth, his words would show the way, even among smirks and giggles. Always in God's footsteps, always in Love's ways.

His face shone with a saintly glow, the peace of God displayed. His gentle words a balm to sooth the aching mind.

T'is told he started up a car, which gas tank the mischievous kids had filled with water. A guardian angel seemed to follow, through jokes, disdain and derision.

And now he's gone to that better place, where he is Prince not pawn.

And miracles already show: the kids that smirked, that joked and laughed, revere him now in Death. Saint Najib is their call, their model, their friend.

I miss him too, in every way. He was the last of his kind, a rare gift we rarely get, and yet somehow ignored when among us. But for Father Najib, it is never too late... after all, the Kingdom is Eternal, and there is always time to collect the Sheep.

Hi memory guides me every day, a model to pursue. Though I may never meet his ways, yet still the light shines through.

Father Najib Aboujaoude, RIP.

My mother grew up in a small village, in a simpler time. Times were hard, and lives were harder.

One can tell many stories of their struggles, chasing after the family cattle, tending the fields, making ends meet.

But one story touches the heart. To drink, to wash, to have water, the essential ingredient of life, she had to lug two heavy jars to the village stream a mile away, fill them with water, and carry them back home. Twice a day, rain or shine.

A young woman, carrying a 60 lb load on her shoulders, over a mile of hill and dale.

And yet, that story was never told with bitterness or hate. It was the way things were, and what nature demanded.

They took life as it came, and made the best of it. No nagging, no “suffering and sacrificing”, just surviving.

Fast forward 50 years, and turn on the TV.

Oh, my God....!!! The world is not up to our standards!!! We are not getting our “rights”!!! The signal on our I-phone is low on the yacht, and we are not able to order Sushi in advance before we land, and may have to wait 10 minutes for it while we use our inheritance credit card to pay for it!! What misery and suffering!! Besides, the ocean spray has wetted our jewelry!! Now the color won’t match our shoes exactly...!! Oh the dastardly world conspiring against our God-Given rights!! Only a massage and a week off (week off from shopping? No- wait, can’t do that...) can compensate us for this travesty. The World “Owes” us that, as a minimum.

Dark thoughts race through the mind, as I contemplate the de-evolution of humanity, even as our science and technology progresses. The Science of the few has enabled the stupidity of the many to survive and prosper, and now they demand it as a “Right”. We may have progressed too fast for our feeble spirits to catch up.

I love characters. I know you do too. I bet you all know a few.

I know many. Very Many, in fact. How come? Because I create them.

Some people are obvious characters, and you don't have to embellish them to enjoy their stereotype. Shukri the shooter, who spent the war putting holes in everything that moved, and everything that didn't, and nursing his "Arak" bottle in between. Shukri is a character, certified (in more ways than one).

But I like to live in a Lucky Luke kind of world, where sharp stereotyping helps me keep track of my characters I deal with on a daily basis. So I create characters for those not obviously so.

Like the smoking-gazebo buddies- the Iranian constantly prodded about organizing demonstrations, or the Irish buddy about his next drink. In jest, I define a "character" for them (which I make sure doesn't offend them), to suit our limited interaction and locale, that tends to perpetuate a "standard" conversation and limit our scope of relation to that "character" suite.

A politically correct character would jump at this point! Aren't I shoe-horning people into a limited stereotype, avoiding a wider interaction to get to ***really know them*** as "people", in all their quirks and majesty? Yes I am, thank you. Why do you ask that like it is a bad thing?? There are 8 billion people on the planet, and given our strangeness and complexity, I could spend my entire life analyzing just one of them. Heck, I barely understand myself. So I am not interested. But since I have to interact with a certain set, our stereotyped interaction helps make it pleasant and less complicated.

Now of course that doesn't mean their human-interest stories don't always come out anyway, and in times of crisis help is offered and shared. It is just that, in normal day to day interactions, it keeps a simpler routine, generally amusing and comical, to lighten the day.

Even those that we don't interact with often, we stereotype, to make it easier to remember and slot them in. The jolly schooldriver

with a hearty goodmorning – that is their image and our “capture” of them, regardless of what ails them at home, who they beat up, or what disease or problem afflicts them. Rarely do we venture beyond the veil.

Now back to those obvious characters. Cousin Samir was one. He had a friend in every town he went to– usually a pigeon breeder he could exchange tips with, or just a fellow hearty drinker he could exchange jokes with. When you think of him, you think of a drink of Ouzo, an offbeat rhyme, another stranger passing by whom he knows well somehow, and an easy going style that says (as he often said) “If you take it easy, it’ll be easy”. I miss that image, and that Character. RIP Samir.

Another character was uncle Hafiz. Witty beyond belief, you could never know if he was telling the truth, a joke, or a joke on you. You had to think before reacting, something that makes you feel awkward when you don’t laugh right at the punchline, or react in shock at the (true?) tragedy. His image is of a Joker, Riddler, storyteller – a character.

Those characters populate the play they call my life. They may come with their complete agendas and complications, but it is MY play. When on my set, I give them their roles, their masks, and deal with them within the character confines I defined for them. They could also be playing their own roles in parallel, in their own Play, but the side facing me plays from my script.

Am I missing something with this game? I sure hope so. As it is, life is incredibly fast and busy, and the world is too much with us. If setting characters into motion helps make some sense of it, then so be it.

Now here’s the catch: when I am ready and able, I can still step out of the play, remove the masks, and delve into the human drama, to help and care. In fact I do that often, for that particular purpose only. Not to psychoanalyze, babble, or dramatize, but to truly help and participate. And once done- its back to the play.

And telling you this was out of character. Now back to the Play.

WICKED MINDS

HOW DO YOU SLEEP

How does a wicked mind sleep, I always wondered. In youth, when I told a lie, I spent a sleepless night, and woke early to redress my slight.

It must be made of other stuff, or otherwise configured, to lie in comfort with an evil deed.

How does a Saddam sleep, or a Hitler dance, or a Pol Pot even eat? Jihadist blow themselves (no loss) and take with them the innocent throng, to gain the favors of a delusional "God".

In truth, I think our criterion for humanity is too lenient. Bipedal is not enough.

If our Human family is to live in Peace, we must exclude those deformed spirits from our fold. Sleeping with the enemy, when that enemy sleeps comfortably with bloody hands, is irrational suicide.

How to exclude them, without transforming into one of them, is our Moral challenge. But exclude them we must.

For life and happiness require a gentle soul.

But a gentle soul is a fragile thing, easily defeated by the wicked throng.

So we must gather in community, to gain the strength to go on. And Community means sharing, through thick and thin, and Love above all.

So the messenger's song remains the cure: "Love thy neighbor", Rich or Poor.

And yet the wicked still roam free, and take advantage of the Peace. Moral Dilemmas must be fought, to fight the murderous in thought.

Thieves we've always had, despised and lurking in the night and shadows.

Those that would take and not give, share the wealth without contributing.

But now they share the light, proud and unashamed. They have found a good agent: our open, relativistic culture. No, not Einstein Relativistic, but "everything is OK" relativistic, and "Poor Unguided Souls" that harm us, whom we should feed and nurture to goodness. Even worse, if it is legal, we should imitate them, praise them, and celebrate them.

They are called by many names: Day Traders the most innocuous; Financial Advisors only slightly worse; Bankers, Politicians, Real-Housewives, Tele-evangelists just long Four-Letter words.

Add Shyster Lawyers, "Social Group Fundraisers", Reality Show popcorn, Union Leaders, Scam artists, Spammers, and con-artists galore.

And then the un-obvious thefts that take advantage of our overloaded minds and uncaring Math: Retirees who suckle at the public trough, well beyond their contribution. Union laws that allow loafers to dip into the wealth unhindered and unfirable. Public Employees who retire after 20 years to double-dip on inflated pensions and lucrative contracts.

Add it up, and we're in debt to our eyeballs, with little left to pay our Children's Future Mortgage.

So what is one to do? Ignore it & join the crowd? Many do.

Or Scream to the Heavens, and declare the wrongs at every instant, at every Forum, till the Shame returns and Morality Reigns. I vote for this, perhaps a Fool's errand, but my conscious then can rest.

"Nothing is enough for the man to whom enough is too little."

Epicurus

Many dream of a return to Nature. After all she is our “Mother” Nature, no?

Well, Mother Dearest! Let us survey your charms.

At the core is mindless chaos, driven by an ongoing survival of the fittest contest, where only the strong survive – just ask Darwin. Nature does not select the saints or the “nice” species – just the strongest and those best able to stay alive till they reproduce.

And look at a Nature reserve... lovely to look at, no? tried living there?? Flies and mosquitos will eat you alive, unless a snake gets you first. Assuming no lions or cheetas around, of course. And where is that tap water anyway? Oh, it is 3 miles down the road (wait.. I mean nature path...no... not opened by a Park guide... you have to cut through it with a Machete... wait... no Machetes in Nature), and you have to drink all you need before you come back, since you cant bring it back with you (no utensils, right??).

Of course Nature plays everywhere, even if you try to hide. Viruses (those little munchkins that look like Mars landers) are all inside you, surviving by destroying your cells. Their bigger cousins, Bacteria, do an even better job of reducing you to dust.

Of course we, as part of Nature, use the same tricks. We fight to survive, including killing our brethren to get what we want or need. And that explains much of our behavior and society today – we are not so far removed from our “Natural” state, even though we have banished Nature from much of our Neighborhood.

Which is why in olden days, more “Natural” days, we barely made it to 30 years of age.

No, Nature alone won’t do. Give me the tamed, friendlier nature we control and nurture. Give me the tools of progress, so I can fight the Natural urge, and only then can I be the gentle manager of Nature’s bounty.

Nature may have begotten us, and raised us like rowdy children, but we can only serve ourselves and serve her in the process, if we rise above her methods.

And that is what many have struggled to do, over many Centuries. And now it is bearing fruit.

And yet... as that fruit comes forth, the Natural instinct returns to many, who would rather steal that fruit than plant and nurture it. They find now a controlled nature, a gentler Jungle in which to roam, with "Rules" that protects them as they hunt and prey. They have "Rights" that protect them as they abuse other's "Rights".

And so begins our De-evolution.

A good joke (abridged version): “How can you tell if a politician is lying?” ... “If his mouth is open....”

Let us for the moment ignore brazen ex-KGB presidents supplying murderous chiefs in Syria, imprisoning anyone who dissents, stuff their Swiss bank accounts, while lecturing the world about human rights.

Switch to “do-gooder” actress, weeping at a Refugee camp as a UN representative, lecturing the world about inequality, before rushing in a private jet to her castle in southern France, just in time for a cocktail party to praise her “heroic” efforts, cutting her yacht tour short to do “humanitarian stuff”.

Or backtrack to Yasser Arafat, complaining about the “murderous, unjust” attack by Israeli commandos on his headquarters, interrupting his own murderous occupation of Beirut, and slowing his killing totals for the day – damn them for lowering his targets and metrics for the week!! The straw in his eye looms a lot larger than the Log he stuck in other people’s eyes.

Drop by a “People’s” republic of Ridiculoustan. The name is too short- it is missing the “Starving, imprisoned, genocide-subjected” “People’s” part. Adding “People’s” to your name does not tell us much about the state of those “People’s” – actually, I take it back – it does tell us that the only place “People” show up in that country is in the name.

Ok, so I am picking on “poor” third world places? Let’s go to Washington. We just gave government workers (ok, I take it back, workers is the wrong name – let us say employees – or check-cashers) a paid vacation, by blocking the budget for a month, and then paying them back pay for time not worked. Ok, so it’s the same as before, but this time “not worked” means staying at home as well.

Or 538 “representatives” of the people not doing a single thing – not one- to legislate, improve people’s lives, or deal with a debt

now approaching \$500,000 per active taxpayer (yes, \$500,000 you owe if you are one of the minority few who actually pays taxes). The good news is, we saved about \$100K by closing the Whitehouse tours (which we could have paid by raising the fee \$5 per tour). The list is long and obvious. A Nobel Prize in economics was awarded to one who proved dictatorship is the best Democracy, and this behavior perhaps justifies that.

A southern preacher cried profusely on TV (his favorite medium for making money prior to his tryst with a prostitute), begging forgiveness so he can go back to his multi-million dollar business. He is back in business again, vehemently lecturing us about the right way and the way of the Righteous! I guess those who can't do, teach. And you can fool some of the people all the time.

Apologies are due to Marie Antoinette. At least she was an honest crook, married to an honest crook, ruling ruthlessly, and declaring it so. If I am going to be robbed and beaten, I don't want to be sweet-talked through it.

There are people who are experts at things. My plumber knows his pipes, what type of solder works best, where things are connected, and how to fix things when they do not work.

More lofty is my ex-physics teacher, who could help us calculate the size of snowflakes and icicles as a function of temperature, and verify that in realtime by bringing in an icicle from the window to measure.

And then there are the ex-sperts.

The financial advisors, whose market advice performs worse than 70% of random dartboard choices. In reality, their advice is 50/50, being a random thought crossing their low-math-grade minds, but once they take their “Management fee”, the ratio drops below 70% of a dartboard.

It has been said an advisor is one who who takes your watch, tells you what time it is, keeps the watch, and charges you for it.

Economists are hilarious at this. They issue daily prognostications on why the stock market went up or down: instability in Syria (as opposed to the usual calm balmy days in Syria???), Positive market influences (like Apple announcing a product, which happens 300 times a day by a thousand major companies), or whatever news item they saw before showing up on TV to “advise” us.

And any “do-gooder” marketer/activists, dedicated to a wellpaying cause (or at a minimum, a good cocktail party bragging point), can chose a “statistic” to support his ill-informed campaign, killing Nuclear energy (replaced by coal-firing planet-warming plants), advocating Ethanol (that needs 30 times the area of the Earth to meet our gaz-guzzling needs, depletes our food supplies, while using more energy to produce than it provides), banning contraceptives (to please a “let them multiply” God, ignoring the “let them starve in misery” part), or any partially analyzed “cool” cause good for a news conference and a “star-studded” show-off

party. Of course, we see the net result of their “wisdom” all around us.

When top experts like Angelina Jolie and Mathew McCaunaghy are our advisors on scientific issues like the environment and global warming, then we’ll be getting exactly what we paid for. We didn’t pay for it? I rest my case. But wait till you pay the final bill, when the results of this expert advice come to roost.

I remember watching in amusement as CNN brought on Charlton Heston to prognosticate on the relative merits of our involvement in the Iraq war. Using all the word combos learnt from multiple scripts, he made a (to the ignorant) intelligent sounding comment. Unfortunately for him, CNN also had Mr Christopher Hitchens, a brilliant reporter and world-traveler, British school, also on the panel. Mr Hitchens simply asked Heston to name the countries neighboring Iraq, a country he was advocating war with and its imminent destruction. “Er... Israel, Russia, ...err... Iran ...” was the illustrative answer. Ok, so he got one right!! Enough to be hosted at the White House the next week as a Foreign Policy “Advisor”. CNN was also happy, filling up air time, and amusing its audience. Hey... everybody is happy, so what’s the issue??... “Er... those people in Iraq....American soldier’s lives...Er...”?

Heston was upset only that we are wasting viewers time (that so very valuable commodity that could be better spent watching the Kardashians!) giving people a geography lesson (thereby setting a precedent for that kind of activity on US soil?!!!). “Oh, keep your hairpiece on.”, as Christopher replied.

To paraphrase Will Rogers: there are lies, damned lies, and “statistics”. And a scientifically illiterate population (sports stats don’t count) makes a good market for shysters.

There’s one born every minute, says P.T Barnum. And that was in his days – we have many more now.

“Fools learn from experience. I prefer to learn from the experience of others.” - Otto von Bismarck

We are adaptive creatures. After all, that is how we evolved and survived, according to Darwin.

So give us a new “System”, and we’ll adapt to it, and make the best use of its capabilities.

I remember a story told by a friend, who had escaped East Germany by jumping the wall in East Berlin. He worked at a steel factory that manufactures nails for the construction industry. His communist overlords would assign them 5 year plan targets to meet – they had a system, and the workers were pawns in that system. So they adapted.

When they were given a quota of 10 million nails, they would set the machines to ½ inch nail settings, and produce 20 million small nails, exceeding their quota, and getting medals as Heroes of Labor. Of course the nails were of no use to the construction industry, which would grind to a halt for those 5 years.

But Ah! Those communist overlords were just as crafty. The next 5 year plan had a target of 5 million **tons** of nails!! So our intrepid workers would set the machines for 4 inch huge nails, and produce 7M tons of them, again garnering Heroes of the Socialist System awards, while the construction workers ponder what to do with the humongous nails.

A system that abuses its victims, gets abused by its victims.

Circle back to more mundane environments.

Look at our legal system, initially setup to punish perpetrators and discourage crime. Add to it a system to protect the innocent, and let loose a million lawyers to fool around in that playground.

You get a system where a thief would sue you for falling through your sky-light, which wasn’t designed sufficiently well to withstand the weight of a thief! You get a radio announcer declaring: “the alleged murderer allegedly confessed to his alleged crime of cutting up his father-in-law and allegedly burying his

body in the backyard, where the alleged police allegedly found it.” You get a woman suing her date for rape, because she has multiple personalities, and even though one of her personalities had consented to sex, her other personalities did not agree! And you get a system where a thief (embezzler is a politically more correct term?) who bamboozles thousands of people of their retirement money (over \$50Billions worth) gets sentenced to a fancy resort in Connecticut. The stories are endless.

Meanwhile, within that system of laws, Government can hide a \$60 Trillion deficit under various categories they don’t have to report, and only admit a \$15 Trillion deficit (bad enough) on which they are not forced to act. And when they act, they cut the most essential services first, to punish us for forcing them to act, and force us to back off. When the military is asked to cut 5% of the budget, they buy the weapons and cut the ammunition, to force us to buy the ammo later lest we lose our entire investment.

They are all adapting as they go, maximizing individual benefits, to the detriment of the whole.

Freedom in this case conflicts with the welfare of our society. Our greater good is being sacrificed to the individual greed, under the guise of freedom and a set of laws that can allow almost anything to happen. And what happens usually is not for our benefit.

An old man recently faked a bank robbery, so he can be arrested, and then medically treated for free while in state custody, as the law requires. He studied the system, and adapted.

“The individual is the true reality in life. A cosmos in himself, he does not exist for the State, nor for that abstraction called ‘society’, which is only a collection of individuals. Man, the individual, has always been and, necessarily is the sole source and motive power of evolution and progress.” – Emma Goldman

When adaptation becomes systemic abuse, thus begins our de-evolution.

Winston Churchill famously said: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." Witty, but is it true?

Of course you say! How could Democracy, the people's choice, not be the best. We associate Democracy with freedom of thought, freedom of choice, People power, etc. All good things, an unbeatable combination.

Enter the mathematicians. It turns out that (proven mathematically, well enough to earn its author a Nobel Prize) passing democratically from individual to collective choices is impossible. It turns out that a "Randomizer" (say like tossing a coin), or even a dictatorship, more often meets the needs of the majority, than democratically chosen alternatives. When society is faced with **multiple** issues to resolve, there is no such thing as a "social consensus" that can correctly drive a democracy.

Kenneth Arrow, our Nobel Laureate, proved this "Arrow Impossibility Theorem", resolving the many paradoxes seen in democratic elections, where the winning issues seem to be not supported by a majority of the voters. A majority position on a combination of issues can often be composed of alternatives that only a minority supports.

American politicians have latched on to this early, and construct their agendas to pander to minority interests as a result. A politician that supports welfare, loose immigration laws, expanded entitlements and retirements benefits, can guarantee election with the support of the various interest groups that benefit from these positions, although each individual position is opposed by a majority of his constituents. Five issues supported by only 10% of the population each can trump the opinion of the 90% of the population that opposes them individually.

In fact, it is possible that a majority vote is obtained supporting a set of positions NOBODY wants. As Celia Green says, "in an autocracy, one person has his way; in an aristocracy, a few people have their way; in a democracy, no one has his way!"

Understanding the system allows well educated voters and parties

to “rig” the system to their advantage. The only voting system that cannot be rigged is a dictatorial system (which is rigged to start with, but not by the voters!).

So, “Democratic voting seems to create a logical contradiction” (Barrow). Collective choices, as opposed to individual choices, create paradoxes where nobody wins. Referendum, where people vote on single issues, and can express their individual choice about that individual item, are a lot more “representative” of people’s choices than general elections, where minority interests add up to a non-representative choice.

Oh well, seems like we can’t win for losing!

Of course, to paraphrase Isaac Singer’s dictum on Free Will: “We have to believe in Democracy. We’ve got no choice!”

Actually we do have a choice... a number of choices WITHIN democracy, to make it work. We need to listen to smart people when they analyze this, and take the lesson to heart. If referendums are a better gauge on policy and people’s choices, use them. If there are ways to organize the elections and subdivisions to improve the chances of the representative choice, take it. Positive, well measured Jerry-Mandering is OK.

And, by the way, one good way of ensuring a good result for an election, is by ensuring a good selection of candidates. So even if your choice does not win, the one that does is not so bad. This means we need better control of who can get elected, and better control of them once they are in office. If we make sure we screen the bad apples, and not just recycle them (as we currently do), then the choices get better with time. When a politician has \$300,000 in his Fridge, we should toss him and his fridge out, never to be seen again. This does not guarantee the next one won’t do it, but at least this one, the one we know did it, won’t have another chance.

Democracy means you get what you asked for. We all know how that works out sometimes.

MINDSCAPES

TO LIVE AND LEARN

Knowledge is our mind's software.

The hardware is essential, but shared with elephant and mouse.

Our knowledge is what makes us Human, our thoughts what makes us special.

We measure our computers by their information processing capacity. An extra-terrestrial would measure us the same way.

And learning is the way to grow our capacity.

The Phoenicians gave us our Alphabet, to write down our thoughts. Papyrus, and our Paper, transmitted it through generations. Gutenberg mass produced it, and spread the knowledge wide. Our Internet made it a commodity. Many have done the hard work to provide it, so we have no excuse to not use it.

Learning is a duty, an essential for an educated society, whose common mind must make the rules and tools for our future survival.

And it is fun to boot. Follow the poet on an excursion to Argentina, on reading a book. Visit the multitude of Mindscapes, cheaper than any scheduled tour. Explore the Universe in your arm-chair.

And learn of the science and art many strove to achieve. Enjoy the labor of millions of scientists and artist, who explored our world and explained it.

For in knowing, you will find liberation. In understanding, a freedom. A freedom of Spirit, knowing its limits, yet unfettered from ignorance. Knowledge to find a purpose, or find there is no purpose.

Knowledge to find the Truth. And the Truth shall set you Free.

The Martyrs of wisdom are many, perhaps the only true martyrs.

The Galileos, the Brunos, the Lavoisier's are known and Legend. But many are the martyrs who gave their lives, not to fanatic killer, but in dedication to the service of mankind, spending their precious moments giving Light instead of passing pleasures and making light of their lives.

The Kepler who spent his ebbing life cataloging the passage of the Spheres, to give us the laws of their Music. The Socrates who spent his last moments discoursing with his students, instead of pleading for a reprieve. The Beethoven who walked in deaf-silence, creating the songs of Eternity. The Diderot who spent his life compiling the knowledge of his age for posterity.

What General can compare to Michelangelo, lining up his angels in majestic views. What Politician can match a line of Shakespeare. What Rich man can match the richness of a Vermeer. What dreamer can match Einstein's reality.

Their work is our lasting treasure, when all else has turned to dust.

And many walk among us today, unappreciated. We pay them a pittance of a baseball player's salary, and wait for their passing for a gentle tribute. Yet their fruit feeds us for an eternity.

And yet they have the last laugh. For they, alone, are our immortals. Their thoughts live on while ours dissipate, their memory kept, in formula names or admired beauty. Many more people of knowledge know of even Galois than Babe Ruth, even today (New York excepted), and a hundred years from now, we will remember Galois, and ask "Babe who??"

A thing of beauty is truly forever.

We take many things for granted. Such is the power of familiarity. Repeated miracles cease to be miracles.

Imagine your small cell-phone, smaller than the one Captain Kirk used in Star Trek – our reality has exceeded in 30 years our 1960's imagination of our future 200 years hence. The list is long, but I'll just pick one.

Get in your car, and program your GPS for directions to the nearest attraction. The road map appears, a soothing voice speaks the clear directions, with mileage, timing, weather, traffic and what have you added to boot.

Who made that GPS device?

- Well, Isaac Newton had a hand. That GPS device gets data from a set of satellites in synchronous orbit around the world, whose exact dynamics and path is based on Newton's laws of motion and gravitation. How do you like them apples?
- Werner von Braun, Goddard, and the whole team of NASA contributed the rockets that launched those satellites, helping escape Gravity's hug, and positioning them within meters of their target locations, thousands of miles above the earth.
- Einstein had a hand as well. You see, with the satellites moving fast, at a low gravity altitude, the effects of relativity come into play. "Time" and clocks run differently up there than on Earth. Without correcting for the effects of relativity, your GPS directions would be off by several miles.
- Dick Feynman had a big hand, assisted by a whole slew of Nobel Laureates, from Bohr to Heisenberg to Pauli to Schroedinger to Planck. From Quantum Mechanics to QED, they teased the knowledge of our small neighbors, the atoms, electrons, and molecules, enabling the electronics industry that made the GPS possible.

- Columbus had a hand, assisted by an army of explorers and discoverers, who mapped the planet slowly to eventually produce the maps of the world we know.
- Lavoisier and Priestley had a hand. The Chemistry they initiated, developed by an army of scientists, lead to the advances in material sciences to be able to make small, compact, durable plastics and metals, that make your GPS lighter, stronger and usable.
- James Maxwell, Thomas Edison, Nicolas Tesla and many others jumped in, explaining electricity, creating electric power industries, designing batteries, power supplies, cabling, and what have you, in time miniaturizing them to fit into your GPS.
- Alan Turing also worked for you, as did John von Neumann. Their computing concepts led to the the small computer on your GPS, enabled by semiconductor technologies that Shockley of transistor fame also helped with. An army of technicians, scientists, and programmers worked for decades to miniaturize the circuitry, advance the programming, and organize the functions necessary for the GPS to do its thing.
- Linguists, mathematicians and artificial intelligence experts even chipped in, helping build the language text-to-voice capabilities that let the GPS talk to you, and the heuristics needed to “see” through the map maze to direct you to your destination.

Lucky you. Thousands upon thousands of hard working scientists, engineers, technicians and thinkers worked for you, to ensure you get to your destination in the shortest possible time. They studied hard, worked long days and many nights, thought through incredible mysteries, and formulated a fantastic canon of knowledge to build the modern infrastructure of our world, that allowed that \$70 piece of magic to sit in your car.

Now, with help like that, how could you get lost?

So what do you think about that?

Herodotus feared the Nemesis, that agent of the fates that lurks behind every success, awaiting its ultimate revenge.

Surely we fear not such myths in this day of progress and technological marvels. We are not as easily fooled as our primitive ancestors.

Yet in every myth lies a lesson to be learnt. Our ancestors were not as primitive as we like to think.

So where lies our nemesis now? The place to look is in our successes.

Our industrial might grows by leaps and bounds. In so doing, it consumes our limited resources, and pollutes our planet. We are scavenging the house we live in. Gaia may be in her last throes.

Technological and scientific marvels abound, from the microworld to the microorganism. We have the tools to make Nuclear power and cure diseases. But we also have the power, increasingly distributed, to make Nuclear weapons and biological weapons, that can obliterate our species.

Our medicines are wonder cures, that resolve the ravages of diseases that have haunted us for eons. So we survive childhood diseases, and we live longer. And thus we end up with 8 Billion people and counting, overwhelming our planet's capacity.

Examples there are many. Each victory plants the seeds of a future defeat.

But surely our ingenuity will continue to find ways to cure the ailments of the future, as we did the ailments of the past?

Which brings me to another limit, perhaps the ultimate one.

We are as smart as our brains and limited life-spans allow. Our collective knowledge has grown by leaps and bounds, and can fill thousands upon thousands of encyclopaedias already. Perhaps we

are approaching the time when we know too much for our minds to manage and hold.

One way to look at this: today it takes 12 years of primary and secondary education, and 4 years of college, to have a basic training in a sub-field of a branch of Science. Something like mechanical engineering, or plant biology, etc. That doesn't make you an expert, but a good starting apprentice to start working in the field. It would take another 5 years for a PhD, which would allow you to start doing research in a very focused part of the field. By this time, you are about 27 years old, and pretty close to the limit of the young "creative part" of your career.

It is already impossible for any man to scope an entire area of knowledge (say like Physics). This was not the case in the 19th century. It is even impossible now for one to know how to build any one of today's devices- say a mobile phone. That phone requires knowledge of electronics, programming, plastics, power engineering, metallurgy, wireless technology, etc. It can only be produced by a collaboration of many experts in those fields. In the 19th century, any experienced experimentalist could build any machine of that age – an engine, a telescope, a microscope. In fact, they usually did.

So we have two ways out: further specialization, focusing on narrower and narrower areas of knowledge, and cooperation among ourselves (and the help of computers) to put it all together. This brings about an opportunity, and a danger.

The more we specialize, the harder will it be to get an Einstein to the rescue. Someone that can look across the scope and breadth of the various ideas and knowledge areas, to see the whole picture, and come up with a new vision, a radical idea. What Specialists do best is chip away at the margins, working on that additional decimal place of accuracy. But they do not come up with the master plans.

Paul Ehrenfest, a genius working at the edge of the quantum game, gave up when he could no longer keep apace of the exploding field,

and took his life in despair. This may be an extreme, but you get the point.

The opportunity comes from cooperation. The NASA programs, the LHC colliders, the Manhattan projects, the Human Genome projects. Increasingly large groups, almost necessarily of international flavor, will become necessary to move forward. The skills needed for cooperation to work, the management technologies, and the coordination tools for such “Big-Science” ventures to work become paramount.

As we approach the limits of our individual capabilities, working together may be our only salvation. The spirit of cooperation that requires, among many people and many nations, must be nurtured and sustained. A new paradigm is required. We swim or sink together.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, they say.

Perhaps a lot of knowledge is equally dangerous. We may have reached that point.

But one thing is for sure: United we stand, divided we fall.

“It is upon the flaws of Nature, not the laws of Nature, that the possibility of our existence hinges.”

John Barrow

Living on the edge is a redundant line. Living is always on the edge, whether right on it, a few inches away, or just close.

Plan A we think of as ideal, the way we would like things to be. I would like to become a scientist, marry a nice woman, have kids, retire comfortably, become famous, etc.

And then there is life. By its definition, it is a random process, with surprises an essential part of the package. Your scientist job falls through. Your retirement fund collapses. Your famous deed makes you infamous. What then?

Enter Plan B. If you think of it, much of life is lived on Plan B. You lose your Scientist option, but you pick up a technology job that takes you all over the world, and you have a blast. Your stock options collapse, but that piece of land you bought triples in value. But that assumes you had that technology degree, and you bought that piece of land.

So a Plan B will happen regardless. If you make Plan B's, you may help ensure your options stay on the good side of things. If you don't, life will choose a Plan B for you. And Nature is capricious this way – it doesn't necessarily have your best interest in mind. Things sometimes work out for the best, but not always. "Tie your camel, and then depend on fate", is the old Arab saying.

So Plan away – B & C at least. Build a buffer to maneuver in. Keep your white pennies for a black day, said my village folks. Get that extra degree; save ahead for the kids; keep an eye on the road ahead while enjoying the view; trust but verify; take care of your health and your wealth; and most importantly, be a nice and kindly person, and keep your friends and family close by – they are ultimately your best Plan B. The person you step on on the way up, you may need on the way down.

And one more thing: you can always exceed your expectations if you set them right. Learn to appreciate what's important in life – it is those things that are usually the easiest to achieve.

Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars, they say. An alien looking at earth would see us as two different species. A white Man and a white woman are more different than a white man and a black man.

But what a difference! It is the essence of life, of our continuity, of love and family, and of our hopes for the future.

Difference & contrast are the essential ingredients of life. Without them, we would have a bland, homogeneous everything. An un-interesting world, perhaps not even a viable world.

Evolution came about exploiting differences in the species, which allowed it to survive changing environments. The flowers gave us different colors, to better attract the bee. The Peacock gave us his fancy patterns, to better attract his mate. They seek to be different, if only to survive.

And out of this difference, comes a beautiful kaleidoscope, a melting pot, a tossed salad, a buffet of life. The white shining light is a mix of red, green and blue and all the colors of the rainbow.

This not a carte blanche to be ornery or maliciously different. Some differences are harmful to the body and the group – our freedom to be different must stop when the group's welfare is at risk. But that still leaves a wide margin for creativity.

So go out and enjoy something different today. Celebrate the variety of Nature, the rainbow of people, and the simply odd or interesting.

And if you notice people looking back at you, then perhaps they are noticing your difference as well. Just Smile and wave back.

Our lives are part of a larger whole, a larger life.

The planet that gave us birth, that sustains us, gave birth to many more.

And in their multitudes, they share that precious gift – Life, that wondrous joy, the mind of the cosmos, that makes us understand our world, and makes our world understand itself. The Universe's way of knowing itself.

Yet that multitude is fragile, weak in its dependence as it is strong in its inter-dependence.

While it sustains, it must be sustained. While it gives life, it must protect its life.

And we, its children, must help keep it alive, if only for our sake.

Our greed eats away at its resources. Our wanton pleasures and rapacious ways destroy its gentle folds. Our careless folly squanders its treasures.

A billion years of evolution is burned by a selfish desire for profit, to warm a temporary want. A billion years of adaption destroyed by a hunting fetish.

And yet the ultimate loser is us. For our "Daisy-World" is reaching its final limits, its cyclic swings growing ever so wild, as it tries desperately to counter our foul deeds. And when it fails to be able to help us, so will we.

And thus would end our odyssey. The brilliant works of Michelangelo, the wisdom of Einstein, the poetry of Shakespeare, would all boil in Venusian heat. For this is how the story ends, unless we re-write the script.

It is not written that we must end this way. But unless we maintain our home, it will be on our heads, Samson-like, our ultimate demise. Are we ready for our final Stand?

“It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the Universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes (of the Universe’s existence), but that we were somehow built in from the beginning... It is very hard to realize that (the entire earth) is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile Universe. It is even harder to realize that this present Universe has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. The more the Universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.” – Steven Weinberg (Nobel Laureate of electro-weak theory fame).

Opinions differ, but the evidence is that we are alone in the Universe. Drake’s formula notwithstanding, its parameters, when studied in the cold light (excluding the wishful thinking of Sagan optimists), even point in that direction.

Not only are we alone. We are even quarantined on this Earth and Solar System.

Schemes of von-Neumann probes colonizing the Galaxy start with a trip of 10,000 years by an intelligent self-reproducing machine. Try to get that funded by our brainy Congress, or supported by our Reality-show obsessed population.

And should such a scheme ever get off the ground, it would take 300-800 Million years to colonize the Galaxy. And the colonists would be machines, not Humans. Try to sell that to anybody.

And in time, an expanding Universe will drive the Galaxies apart, so much so that their light will no longer reach us. The sky will be dark, and run as we may, we can never outpace Space. What a cruel Universe!?? No, cruel is not the word... “The secret of the Universe is Apathy.” (Isaac Bashevis Singer). It doesn’t even care enough to be cruel.

No species has lasted forever, and ours will not either. Whether we blow ourselves to smithereens, toast our planet in Global warming, or simply evolve to something else (we are after all, only a 100,000 year old species, a spec of time in cosmic scales), Homo Sapiens will disappear.

Intelligent machines could live longer, perhaps become immortal, but they would not be us. Even if we transfer our “selves” into them, we would not be “US”. Immortality may come, but not for “US”.

And while it may be a long-time compared to our human life scale, Earth is doomed by its Sun’s lifespan. Eventually, in a few hundred million or a few Billion years, it shall be no more.

So we are quarantined both in Space and Time.

And we are alone. Help will not come from outside: Others don’t exist, and if they did, they are equally quarantined. A speed limit (light) and a vast divide (4 lightyears to the nearest star) conspire to ensure this.

Pointless is the key point. All our dreams, heroic efforts, and struggles will end in Fire. Even the Universe cannot escape this, as it dies, probably in Ice.

So do we despair, or change the rules?

Einstein thought we (as individuals) exist forever, in a “slice” of “Space-Time”, a hundred years or so of time on a small slice of Space we call Earth. If we think of “Space-Time” as always there (in whatever state, from hot Big Bang to Heat Death), then we have this ensured spot in it, “always”, whatever that means.

And since this is the only spot we have, let us learn to live with that, and make sure it is a pleasant spot for us and our “contemporaries” (those in the same slot in time and space).

Perhaps that is the best we can do.

We are of course still an infant civilization, a few thousand years out of our caves. What we know we learnt in a few hundred years, a smidgeon of time. Perhaps, in time, more wonders are in store, and an escape is possible.

But it is only possible if we survive to find those wonders. And we will only survive if we make this a pleasant spot for us and our “contemporaries”.

Two scenarios, same conclusion.

So what are we waiting for?

“There are two ways of spreading Light: to be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it.”

Edith Warton

“Not the power to remember, but its very opposite, the power to forget, is a necessary condition of our existence.” – Sholem Ash

As life grows, from infant to old age, so we learn and grow. Our experiences form our personality, our essence, our software, which defines us.

And those experiences, good and bad, accumulate a residue, which affects our future experiences and interactions, and hence the future of our personality.

As Oscar Wilde loved to say: “The old believe everything; the middle aged suspect everything; the young know everything.”

A toxic mix will kill all new growth. A goodly soil will nurture a healthy crop. And so forgetfulness is a gift, under-appreciated, that lets us cleanse the spirit of its messy past. To forget is to ultimately forgive, to forget is to learn to live with the good that stays, and ignore the bad that decays.

And as we mature, we must learn the skill of what to remember, and what to forget. Forgetting does not change the Past, but the past is a closed treasure chest, visible only when we open it up to peek, and what we take out from it is in our hands. Pick out the treasures, and discard the rest.

It is true that we cannot, at times, undo what has been done. For in the visible effects of the present, we sometimes see the past. But we must try, and try hard, to rectify the present, in order to rectify the past.

It is said our Souls are the programming of our mind, the software of our bodies' hardware. And like all software, it must routinely be purged of those “junk” files that contaminate it, corrupt it, and slow it down. We all need to be reset, every now and then.

So let bygones be bygones. Forgive and Forget. Look to the future, not the past. Love thy neighbor as you would love yourself. And

learn from your mistakes, without dwelling on them. And act where you can, to make up what you can.

And you must act fast.

“For when I was a babe and wept and slept,

Time crept;

When I was a boy and laughed and talked,

Time walked;

Then when the years saw me a man,

Time Ran;

But as I older grew, Time flew.”

- G. Pentreath

One answer is easy: I am Sam, son of Sami & Minerva, Grandson of Fadlallah & Adele on Sami's side, Khattar & Adele on Minerva's side.

But that is just the name.

"Human beings are what they understand themselves to be; they are composed entirely of beliefs about themselves and about the world they inhabit." –Michael Oakeshott.

I know whence I came. By name of ancestor for the last 400 years of family name; by lineage for a thousand years of Norman & Lebanese fame. By Tribe and history for 6,000 years of Phoenician grandeur.

Looking backwards, I know the rough outline of my story for 14 billion years. From Big Bang, to Galaxy, to Solar System, to Planet Earth, to first Amoeba, my ancestor 100 billion times removed. And fast forward to my birth, in a small town in Mount Lebanon, the Holy Mountain, where I grew up, in the heritage and faith of my kin, and learnt the ways of the world from Friends and friends.

And I know about Now. In my adopted country, a father of four beautiful kids, a husband of a beautiful wife. A friend, a brother, a son, an uncle, a nephew, a cousin, a neighbor, a colleague, a boss, an employee, a compatriot, a citizen.

An engineer, a scientist, a manager, a writer, a historian, a linguist, a poet of mild skill. Labels that define my work, my hobbies, and my interests, but barely start to scratch my essence.

I know many languages, but also understand whence they came, and how they can be used and abused. I know many religions, and how they came about, how we created them, and whence they lead us. I know many places that I have visited and wondered at their beauty and diversity, and at their heritage of antiquity and modernity. I know many people that I have met, befriended and enjoyed, in all walks of life, in various places, countries and

situations. Common people, famous people, “important” people, and wandering souls, with diverse cultures and backgrounds.

I know many sciences, and many arts, and know enough to know you cannot know enough, and cannot know everything. I know of our history, our evolution, and the many heroes and villains that helped shape it, and made our modern society what it is, for better or worse. I know our geo-political sphere, our economy, our politics and its antics.

And I know enough jokes to make light of it all.

It seems the more we know, the more we know how little we know. Both about the world, and about ourselves. Our only consolation is that we are not alone, and that our dilemma is shared by much of humanity. I am, after all, a human. We are, for all our differences, for all our varied skills and experiences, pretty much the same.

And then there is the future.

I know a bit of the future. Of legacy in the Children, of our world’s constant struggles, its hopes and aspirations, and the inevitable end of it all. What remains is in the hands of fate, but like all things, it will also end. For what it’s worth, I left a paper trail, for those who may care to follow, of a sample life in a great big world. The fates will eventually erase this, and file me among the billions who have passed this way, dust in the wind.

But in this day, in this place, I am. An instance in time, a thought, a “spirit”, part of an environment and society of equally perplexed souls. A positive influence, I hope, however that is defined, but that is not for me to judge.

I am a sample of life, that wondrous accident of fate, that gave the Universe a Mind, and that has mushroomed to fill this lovely globe.

I think, therefore I am – at least for a while.

- "Life is Nature's way of keeping meat fresh." – Anon.
- "I used to be indecisive, now I'm not so sure." – Benny Hill
- "All's well that ends well." – William Shakespeare
- "All's well that ends." – Sam Abujawdeh
- "How do you tell if a rabbit is male or female?" "Yell at it; if she runs, it's a female; if he runs, it's a male". Ok- this is random thoughts, so not all are brainy, wise, or otherwise. Sometimes the funny word slapstick carries as much wisdom. Certainly more fun. A recent \$6M government funded study concluded that vicious serial-murderers are "socially misadjusted". Is that funnier? \$6M funnier?
- A dog will not bite the hand that feeds it. That is the main difference between Man and dog.
- There are three major problems with our educational system today. (1) It produces people who can barely count and (2) it produces people who are always complaining.
- If the great Apostle Peter, the founder of the Catholic Church, is a doorman in Heaven, then what do you think our chances are of landing a decent job there?
- Sinning is a religious Duty. If Jesus died for our sins, and we don't sin, then he died for nothing. Would you want that on your conscience?
- "Your raise will be effective the same day you are." – my old boss.
- Gravity is perplexing. Newton says it is constant. But when I lift a \$100 worth of groceries, it seems a lot lighter than it felt 25 years ago. So Newton's "constant" should be decreasing. On the other hand, trying to go up the stairs clearly indicates it must have greatly increased over the last 25 years.
- Do you get the feeling some folks walked off their family tree too early? They seem to have developed locomotion, while the rest of their faculties are still at the vegetable stage.
-
- I'm thinking, I'm thinking..... wait, this is all about random thoughts. I'll just wait till they come along. Besides, I already documented the non-random thoughts elsewhere ☺.

RESUME & RESUME

MIND OR MATTER?

Quintillion atoms clash and stir,
in Quantum Fury and repose,
my Mind to hope and then despair,
and yet a spirit I suppose.

What are we then, electron storms,
Or virgin matter full of thought?
Conceit would rather lofty norms,
But Newton tells its all for naught.

And yet in truth, we do create,
From clashing matter logic born,
Material turns to love and hate,
From earthen bosom Mind is torn.

If Quantum can "Othello" write,
And gravity a Rubin stone,
Then call it Mind or Spirit's Might,
For Matter 'tis unknown.

For Matter it doesn't matter,
What complexity games,
When spinning Es and atoms clash
Come up with fancy names

The sum exceeds the pieces,
And life is truly Made,
From nothing, from the logic,
That emptiness pervade

ANTHROPIC DREAMS

*Is it for us, this magnum field,
Infinite cosmos, much unseen,
A perfect Alpha tuned our yield,
Against the odds, so Mind has been?*

*Why all this wealth, unused, unseen,
"Useless Besides", as Dante dreamed,
Extravagant, Nature is not,
But yet for us so much is sealed.*

*But then alas, Seat Death will come,
The works of Man in vain undone,
What purpose then, what master plan,
This grandeur, glory come and gone?*

*The Universe has birthed a Mind,
As father's wont, but can't sustain,
Its children's life, or stop the death,
That always comes, with fits and pain.*

*But will prodigious Sons undo,
The plans of fate, go on?
Only united will they win,
And so they must not Wrong.*

*To fight the grand majestic Fates,
We must defeat the Fate,
That covers all our daily plans,
Destroying plans of State.*

***Perhaps the message sent was clear,
Love thy neighbor, Far and Near,
For only then will we sustain,
And hold on Life and all that's Dear.***

LIBANUS - PHOENIX

**Majestic mounts, and azure shores,
Where Hiram's fleets did roam,
The Holy Mountain of repute,
The place I call my home.**

**Where Phoenix lived and spread the word,
Where Bible Byblos named,
Where Cadmus taught the Greeks to write,
And fathered Thales famed.**

**Where mountain goat, and shepherd live,
In harmony and Light,
Adoring Nature's bounty, viewed
Among the Rivers bright.**

**Its sailors did the world explore,
From India to Brazil,
Exporting knowledge, Peace and goods,
From shore to neighbor hill.**

**Its mountains kept the faithful safe,
In faith and high goodwill,
Through vicious onslaught they persist,
Dispensing virtues still.**

**And as I look upon that Mount,
That saw my life alight,
I wonder at the beauty still,
I wonder at the sight.**

The Pines that breezed the air I drew,

*The Green majestic hills,
The snow topped peaks that rise above,
The rivers and the mills.*

*But most of all, the people kind,
My kind, my gentle folk.
That lived through rough and vicious times,
And yet would never yoke.*

*Their laughter brings the joy to life,
Their merry ways abound,
For how could they not laugh and play,
With beauty all around.*

*May God his mountain always hide,
From Danger, far and near,
And may the Cedars always rise,
Above the death and fear.*

*And when great stories are retold,
And people grand are writ,
Remember our Phoenician folks,
Whose glories conjure wit.*

*And may our Saints, in God's abode,
Keep us from every harm,
Their sacred ways our lives alight,
In every home and farm.*

*Our Golden Days have gone, but now,
We make a Golden age,
Phoenician grandeur still lives on,
Libanus Phoenix Page.*

DAUGHTERS DELIGHT

Sweetness and Light, is what I feel,
When Daughter passes by,
Love and joy does overcome,
T'is nature's way, says I.

And three such Gems my life begot,
With wit and charm, and beauty,
No treasure can compare to this,
No gift or Gold or bounty.

Sandoura's Light, & Ouvi Bright.
With Jinjin to adorn,
No sight with this can yet compare,
No dawn or lovely morn.

As time goes by, and I get Old,
And ravages accrue,
I seek the solace of their warmth,
To care when care is due.

But more important is the Joy,
That seeing them does bring,
The gentle breeze their walking sight,
Brings on, an early Spring.

And as I watch them in success,
Exceed the humdrum Norm,
Defying all the stereotypes,
That olden mind did form,

I beam in Pride for my beloved,

*As they defeat the storm,
And just as well, for Female Kind,
Accomplished, kind and warm.*

*I tell them oft, I tell them loud,
I love you everyday,
And I will love you, Evermore,
Today and Come What May.*

How do tell of such a swell,
How to describe an Ouvi,
No words her beauty can expound,
No novel or a movie.

My first born light is shining bright,
No Legal can compare,
Her wisdom and her daring,
Are matched by loving care.

As child she fought the "Namla",
So cute we couldn't bear,
She grew up such a dancer,
Her music 'yond compare

Her brother and her sisters
Depend her every move,
She is a mom when Mom is out,
A friend, when friends behoove

Her wit is quick and biting,
Her comebacks very swift,
And yet she smiles at my bad jokes,
To give a caring lift

To see a child so gorgeous,
Dependable and true,
An oak when storms are rising,
A Rose in Summer's blue.

**My heart is full of boasting,
Of my first-born success,
I love you my dear Ouvi,
May always our God Bless.**



SANDOURA

*Sandoura, my Ghandoura,
No rhyme can well describe,
The aching love I hold for you,
No poet, not a scribe*

*Your joy, your "Fizz", your smiling,
Does make the day's Sunshine,
Your angel contemplation,
That says the world is fine.*

*When "Out" with other "People",
Or e'en at 4 am,
My heart does feel the happiness,
You make me what I am.*

*A Spartan, a Skydiver,
Courageous 'yond compare,
No challenge is beyond you,
No scary act or Dare.*

*But most of all an angel,
That makes the day so bright,
A loving soul to guide us,
To that angelic height*

*And when my days are over,
I feel at ease and rest,
That I have you Sandoura,
The Greatest and the Best*

*May all your days be happy,
May all your life be smile,
Remember Daddy watching,
From Heaven all the while.*



*Our JinJin, our dear Jano,
The password to success,
The smartie and the beauty,
Fashionista, yes, no less.*

*The signs were shining early,
A star is on the rise,
The good looking is coming,
The fancy and the wise.*

*She plots her life and purpose,
With such graphic design,
You wonder how these gifts accrue,
In this small treasure mine*

*And I the beaming father,
Do watch with pride and glow,
They tell me "Oh, this Jano",
I tell them, "Yes, I know".*

*I love you dearest Baby,
Always our Baby girl,
How does a smart young lady,
Have such a lovely Curl*

*I worry 'bout the future,
The life's unending task,
I wish I could stay with you,
To help you when you ask*

*But e'en though I falter,
And sooner disappear,
Remember, I, your father,
Have always loved you dear.*

*My spirit will stay with you,
To watch your lovely air,
To bring the news to heaven,
Of Earth's daughter fair*

*And as I watch you gently,
I hope your star will shine,
And happiness be with you,
And luck with you and thine.*



RIISING SON

***My legacy, my living strength,
My future hopes through time,
It is my Son, through thick and thin,
That shines through stormy clime.***

***A handsome youth, strong limb and mind,
Greets every rising Morn,
Beloved of his Sis's & Mom,
Our lives he does adorn.***

***And through the years we watched him grow,
A kind and gentle soul,
But heaven help you if you will,
His Sis's lives befoul.***

***And through his life my name shall be,
Bou-Sammy, as they say,
A Prouder name I cannot find,
And that is who I'll stay.***

***I loved him from the moment first,
And will to moment last,
He will our shining Future hold,
As I go to the Past.***

***Samsoumy, dearest Son of mine,
My heart is all with you,
May life & love be kind and grow,
And keep you all Life Through.***



BEAUTIFUL WORLD

**Look in wonder all around,
At mountain beauty, river, dale,
At smiling people, laughing child,
At gentle breeze, or raging gale.**

**Imagine all this rolling scene,
Evolving with delight,
Creating canvas full of awe,
A pleasing, soothing sight.**

**For Nature does its charms display,
To those discerning eyes,
If you wear colored glasses, then
The colors hide the why's**

**Enjoy the view, don't analyze,
For Chaos reigns supreme,
For fractal beauty, wild and free,
Is smarter than the meme.**

**There is no why, there is no Cause,
Just random patterns grown,
And yet for this alluring sight,
No rhyme or reason's shown.**

**Enjoy the tree, the flower's bloom,
The joke, the passing gag,
The loving folks, the hugs and warmth,
And all in Nature's bag.**

*For thou shall pass this way but once,
And never to return,
Analysis will waste its way,
From womb to funeral urn.*

*The poets always had it right.
To dream, within the Dream,
And Scientists, who studied all,
Were poets at the seams.*

*For they were looking beauties new,
Inside the atoms small,
To glory further in delight,
At marvel's inner wall.*

*But seriously is not the way,
For serious this is not,
To while the time in sad demure,
Is such a wasted lot.*

*"So Gather roses while ye may",
The poet said of old,
The moment's pleasures pass away,
More valued than the Gold.*

*And when its time for you to go,
A time you cannot hide,
At least you'll say, I saw it all,
I saw it far and wide.*

*And should the Law of ages come,
To judge your life's proceeds,
Then smile and marvel at the scene,
For pleasant were your deeds.*

*Just tell the Judge I saw it all,
A wondrous sight for sure,
Your works are mighty, Mighty Judge,
I fought not such Allure.*



GOOD A'BOY

**The sparkle blue that is the eye,
Exploding smiles that shine,
The handsome face that cries hello,
That's Joey, Buddy, mine.**

**We met when he was only one,
And I a man of age,
But children's love can cross the gap,
That adults often stage.**

**When morning he would run to meet,
With shouts of Vey Vey Vey,
My heart would jump, my face would light,
That shout would make my day.**

**And as buddies we would hang,
To "Kick it", "Hit it" too,
I follow in his every step,
A human pet, t'is true.**

**And Dunkin would await each day,
For Joey's "Dozen" cry,
For no one can resist the joy,
No matter how they try.**

**We know the countries flags by heart,
The capitals as well,
The states and every puzzle game,
With genius we can tell.**

*The Hurricanes and storms we like,
The J-pad we adore,
And if a toy we should desire,
"J neeed it!" at the store*

*But most of all the innocence,
The honest "Love you" call,
The children's joy at every new,
The joy of being small.*

*My dearest Joe, my buddy dear,
J wish you all the best,
Remember uncle Sam in time,
When J am laid to rest.*



BROTHERS FOUR

*It's Sam and Tony, Elie, Joe,
Four names that travel tight,
Through life's refrains and distance great,
They're joined in loving might*

*The characters of single womb
Display a wondrous range,
But t'is the love they warmly share,
Unites the habits strange*

*The "Rayess", leader ya Antoun,
With booming, boasting call,
The caring father of a town,
The strength when others fall.*

*The tall one, Maska wolverine,
Elie the handsome beau,
The father of my "Ammo Sam",
The easy-going flow*

*The handsome boy with eyes o'green,
The sweetheart of the bunch,
The Joey that is filled with love,
The crutch in every crunch.*

*Together we did share the home,
The meals and laughter too,
The joy of loving mom and dad,
A happy motley crew.*

*The stories we can tell galore,
The funny moments too,
The sadness shared, as well the joy,
Remind me so of you*

*And when in time we all depart,
Our good name shall sustain,
For Sami's sons are known and loved,
Minerva's seeds remain.*



THE STRUGGLE

**The daily struggles labor on,
From baby born till Death,
In sickness foul, or fate beset,
From first to final breath.**

**For neighbor upon neighbor sets,
And cruelty accrues,
Inhuman goes our human world,
'Tis filled with saddened rue.**

**And when the books of fate are sealed,
To balance all the deeds,
The misery is there to see,
The happiness recedes.**

**So why then go through farce & play,
In this deluded game?
E'en Schopenhauer rued the world,
Despite his wealth and fame.**

**Perhaps our sight is all askew,
Perhaps the colored glass,
Does focus on the sordid side,
While goodness comes to pass.**

**For look around, my earthly friend,
At friends both near and far,
Remember all the love reserved,
glows like a shining star.**

*It is this Love that keeps the world,
Still humming through the tears,
For t'is only Love that counts at last,
The Love of waiting dears.*

*It is this Love that separates,
The Man from frozen rock,
That gives us our humanity,
It is our surest dock.*

*And when t'is all been said and done,
No other value stays,
Our earthly treasures may be gone,
But we keep True Loves' ways.*

*So Love thy neighbor, when you can,
And Love him, when cannot,
And Love your family day and night,
For Love does tie the knot.*

*And when life's game has ran its course,
And time has come to pass,
Do tell her with your dying breath,
I Love you, my sweet lass.*

*For memories are just made of this,
Those golden moments true,
And through the memories you'll remain,
In their heart all life through.*

CARPE DIEM

**The hands of fate have helpless arms,
Designers they are not,
We hold the keys to our demise,
We are the one who plot.**

**The winds of chance do blow about,
Environments dictate,
But in our hands does lie the key,
To turn the game of fate**

**The oak from acorn surely grows.
As seasons come and go,
It seeks the light, it turns its way,
It seeks the waters flow**

**So in our travails far and wide,
Our efforts do accrue,
A healthy harvest, well ordained,
Will give to each his due**

**For planning is success's door,
Hard work its ladder sure,
And knowledge surely guides the way,
To wisdom's hallowed, Pure**

**So seize the day, my hardy friend,
And make the way assured,
Make "Carpe Diem" your daily call,
Your harvest has matured**

IMMORTALITY

Why would we want to live so long,
When boredom hits so soon,
When we can barely pass the day,
Why need a hundred Moon?

There is so much to see and share,
but surely time will come,
when grandeur is explored so well,
when all is said and done.

Yet Cling we do to life's last days,
Still hoping to persist,
Defying Darkness to the end,
The fading Light resist.

Yet if we think as family,
As part of God's domain,
Our Children are our Genes and Memes,
They're us, in separate Mane.

So will our selves continue then,
While Children live and grow,
Our message passed throughout the years,
By loving kids we sow.

And we can even live at large,
In world renown survive,
Mandela does, for all of time,
As Jesus lives and thrive.

**Our memory lasts as our Deeds do,
As thoughts deploy and flow,
Our Memes are us, the good we sow,
That lives on and will grow.**

**So put those tiring limbs to rest,
Just let your thoughts survive,
And meanwhile, 'fore that final day,
Enjoy the time you strive.**

**For we shall pass, like others did,
And that we cannot stop,
The days we lose will ne'er return,
So party till you Drop!**

ODE TO NOTHING

*Nothing from Nothing leaves Nothing,
The rhymers said,
Such self reliance Nothing has,
Why not chose it instead*

*For Nothing is grander than a King,
More valuable than Gold,
Nothing is better than success,
The joke was told of Old.*

*Nothing between two lovers,
Excites the carnal bliss,
Nothing to do is wished for,
By busy boy and Miss*

*So if you are insulted:
"You Know Nothing", brag,
For Nothing is more important
Than knowledge's high flag*

*For t'is Nothing to sneeze at,
T'is Nothing to ignore,
For when it's good its "No-thang"
And you need Nothing more*

*If you have learnt this lesson,
And learnt of Nothing else,
Then Nothing will stand in your way,
Nothing will give you wealth*

*Astronomers purvey the 'verse
And wonder whence it came,
From Nothing comes the answer true,
T'is vacuum, just a name*

*For when you add the matter large,
And energy sublime,
The gravity potential does,
Keep balance all the time*

*So all this stage, so large and real,
Did emptiness evoke,
From Nothing came the mighty Deed,
The vacuum when it spoke.*

*I care for Nothing, my refrain,
A pleasant easy mind,
When Nothing is my key concern,
I can avoid the Grind.*

*The end of Nothing is this thing,
And this will also end,
And when this thing will be undone,
Nothing will be our friend*

*So Nothing ventured, Nothing gained,
The circle will complete,
For Nothing guides the hands of fate,
Though cycles may repeat*

*I speak of Nothing, often much,
Perhaps I speak a lot,
Too much of something is extreme,*

Too much of Nothing, Not.

*This much ado 'bout Nothing,
As Shakespeare deftly said,
Nothing is more amusing,
Nothing is better read*

*When all is fully said and done,
And have Nothing to say,
Do not this treasure squander,
and say Nothing today*

*The Zero makes the numbers large,
The vacuum cosmos fills,
The emptiness does make the room,
For things to show their skills*

*The contrast shows the value,
The yin-yang shows the truth,
Existence needs the vacuum,
The cavity the tooth*

*I know I have said Nothing
You don't already know,
But sometimes saying Nothing
Will make the logic glow*

*So here's a cheer for silence,
To emptiness of care,
May Nothing ever harm you,
May Nothing ever Scare*

HIBISCUS RED

**The random shoot came all unplanned,
Hibiscus Red it grew,
And all a sudden, spring surprise,
The Chandelier is new**

**The tumbling earth, the blowing seed,
Not bought or planted right,
Begot a magic flower bloom,
Declared the random might**

**At first one thought another weed,
A lowly spreading vice,
In haste the beauty could have died,
Had but we thought it twice**

**A gift of nature, given free,
A beauty to redeem,
Perhaps to teach a lesson learnt,
Though Random it may seem.**

**The best laid plans, of mice and Men,
Could never match the deed,
That roiling nature does unplanned,
At it prepares the seed.**

**For evolution, Mother's way,
Invents in eons slow,
And fashions slowly better ways,
To make her garment glow**

*For from this mud she did design,
And bring around the life,
The lowly weed, the lofty Pine,
Came through among the strife*

*For small beginnings grow unbound,
As time and law allows,
Amoeba crawls and fights the mud,
But soon a Shakespeare bows*

*Enjoy the bounty, worry not,
For Nature has a plan,
Not timed or charted, it unfolds,
For benefit of Man*

MY SOMETOWN

*The gentle hills among the mounts,
The green green Pine around,
The clear cold spring that gives its name,
Where Nature's gifts abound.*

*The old stone terraces and fields,
They carved from mountain rock,
The Fig and Olive trees as old,
As caring hands did stock.*

*The Church does gather healthy flock,
A family's one name,
Three centuries it stood the shocks,
Against the angry game.*

*Boujaoudes all, my village folk,
A single loving stock,
All cousins, uncles, distant kin,
No stranger can unlock.*

*And growing there among the love,
Among the fields of orange grove,
Among the apple trees's enchanting view,
We tendered and we strove.*

*My uncle's cow, there at the trough,
The chicken in the barn,
The dogs and cats that mill around,
The wooden shack's old yarn.*

*The funny jesters, tricks well played,
That fill the night with tales,
The tough boys who in war displayed,
And stood against the gales.*

*The meals that families do share,
With kin and passing guest,
The constant call to join the fold,
To drink and share the jest.*

*Old customs stay among the fold,
On Easter, Friday, Palm,
With colored eggs and candles bright,
With smiles among the calm.*

*And come September we do dress,
For St Taqla's feast,
When gathers all who live in town,
And immigrants, not least.*

*The many who have left and gone,
Still yearn to olden home,
They yearn to hearth and ancient ways,
No matter where they roam.*

*The friends of youth, there still remain,
The memories frozen still,
Our youthful face they still recall,
Though time does ravage ill.*

*I still recall the old Fig tree,
My mother tended well,
The balcony we sat and played,
And had a time so swell.*

*The games of cards that went all night,
The bragging and the calls,
The drinking bouts with friend and foe,
The laughter 'mong the walls.*

*The gentle smile, the loving looks,
Of aunt and uncle's care,
They tell you now that all is well,
No danger there to scare.*

*And Cousins gather now and then,
Exchanging jokes and laugh,
The blood is thicker than the juice,
They break their bread in half.*

*And though the distance breaks the heart,
And memories always fade,
The memory of the love they gave,
Has always with me stayed.*

*My Maska, my departed home,
My bones do yearn for thee,
No matter where I go and roam,
Remember you in glee.*

FRIENDS

***Those friends of old I still recall,
That made the days so sweet,
The best friends and acquaintances,
Remembrance not so fleet***

***My village chums that shared the home,
We walked the roads and hills,
In idle chat or warm embrace,
The vaguest memory chills***

***My friend Kamal, of humor boasts,
Discussing Plato's deeds,
"come join us , if you dare!" he calls,
The stranger strangely heeds.***

***The High School buds who learnt the ways,
Of life and social skill,
Emile, Riad and Scavo,
My brothers, well or ill.***

***The folks at work that more than shared
A common duty's call,
A bond was made that still remains,
A team, the one for all.***

***From Hugo, to Emile my "Bud",
To Jean Claude & French crew,
The funny jokes, Thanksgiving meals,
The fellowship we knew.***

And now a new crop does arise,

*From Children's friendly ways,
The "Rainy ones", the Pluviose clan,
That brighten rainy days.*

*The neighbors, family of near,
The Barbs and Neals we love,
The ones who passed, and who remain,
The hands that fit the glove*

*A friend in need, a faithful soul,
Does make the life worthwhile,
The caring that they show above
Life's caprice and its guile*

*So here's for all the ones we met,
Remembered and forgot,
That made the road a joyous trip,
A cheerful loving lot*

*My dad did always relish this-
His most sincere advice,
In every town do make a friend,
A home from home entice*

*For in the end, what are we then,
But members of commune,
It is the sharing that defines,
Our place in heaven soon*

*And when the time does come to part,
We sadly rue the day,
But knowing faith does keep the bonds,
"we'll meet again" we say.*

SIMPLY MOM

How do You name a longing,
An infinity of Love,
No ending or Beginning,
I simply call it Mom.

No learning school or fancy ways,
Did raise her to sublime,
She started there, and instead raised,
Her Children against Time.

Through Hardy days, & long cold nights,
She suffered through and through,
Yet no complaints did someone hear,
But only "I Love You".

No matter what the Fates would bring,
She'd smile and look away,
As long as kids were doing fine,
She'd tell them "Come what May".

In time the ravages did tell,
And humble body frayed,
But Spirit rose when Children called,
And her Grandchildren Played.

And in the end, with hand in hand,
She did bid me Farewell,
A moment I will ne'er forget,
A moment made in Hell.

*An yet her memory still remains,
To brighten darker days,
Remembering her love and care,
Sustains me in my ways.*

*And when I'm asked what makes you strong,
What makes the heart so hum,
What makes you gentle, good, and fair,
I say: "It's simply Mom".*



MY FATHER'S WILL

**I saw in papers old and torn,
A paper I had missed,
A note from Dad, for future meant,
I read it, and then kissed.**

**His warmest love he did declare,
As if that needed write,
To his four boys that he had raised,
And showed them wrong from Right.**

**He asked forgiveness, when in truth,
His deeds deserved our thanks,
How do you thank a Dad so dear,
Whose life uplifts the ranks.**

**He was a rebel in his youth,
A tough boy, right and fair,
His name remembered all for good,
A light among despair.**

**His words advised us on a path,
That true men rarely lead,
To give and honor those who give,
To be real men in deed.**

**To honor faith, and ancient kin,
To guard the hearth and home,
To be protectors of the faith,
No matter where we roam.**

**He prides in his paternal gifts,
A leader among men,
Though sickness weakens hearty hearts,
He still remembers when.**

**I ache for every passing day,
When we are still apart,
And when the fates come calling in,
The great man will depart.**

**But we shall always be his kids,
His name to raise and hold,
For never Sami did regret,
His days, be new or Old.**



MASKA KID

*There was a boy from Maska,
Who's shy and couldn't ask her,
Till superman was called,
And Lois Lane did mask her*

*He was a quantum master,
His mind no idle dastard,
But love does conquer all who stray,
You run, but it runs faster*

*And so he fell for beauty,
And did his manly duty,
For married did they end at last,
The beast did catch the cutie*

*And off to Yankee land they went,
Where happy moments were well spent,
And four kids later, they still join
Beneath their crowded tent*

*And so it is, will always be,
A merry happy family,
Together from begin to Last,
A joyful house of glee.*

*Enjoy the noise, enjoy the romp,
That 3 am waking bump,
For quiet will not this house come,
While family plays the Trump*

*The boy from Maska has done well,
To get a girl so swell,
For never was a match so fine,
In Heaven or in Hell*



REQUiem

**And when I'm gone... my time is done,
Take me to that lovely spot,
Where first saw light, where Mount meets Sun,
Alas, that I am not.**

**On green Pine hills, On Sunny slopes,
Where hearth and kin remain,
Lay me to rest, Release my soul,
Her Earth my bones sustain.**

**But wait, and forward look my friend,
My seed afar is laid,
And me alone at first home still,
In Pining's thirst, afraid.**

**Then take me back to my new home,
Where my kids yet still rave,
So they may visit my repose,
And feel the love I gave.**

**So e'en in death, my spirit aches,
'tween old and new-born blood,
But new blood wins, the bond is strong,
Ties son to father's mud.**

**For I shall wander evermore,
Till all in heaven's join,
And lovely daughters, son and Mom,
Together at the loin.**

*And for my Children, & while I can,
"I love you, always did",
My heart still aches from Hugs not long.
For nothing matches Kid.*

*Your Mom and I we raised you well,
With Love, and kindness too,
The fruit it bore does make us proud,
But more, we still Love You.*

BECOMING

BEGINNINGS

*It all began with shapeless void,
Not emptiness for that is nought.
Nor nothing for that something is,
Nor vacuum, that is space unsought.*

*It was the chaos, undecided self,
Not being or unbeing felt,
For logic was yet still unborn,
And sense still lacked our baby Welt.*

*And then the Word, or being rose,
A YES, a being, a logic plus.
And with that yes there came a NO,
For being brings its anti, thus.*

*And as the being logic grew,
And one and one did thus make two,
Then being with itself did share
A kinship, an attraction too.*

*As Sanchoniaton declared,
Enamored, was the void ensnared,
We call it gravity perhaps,
The rules of mathematics bared.*

*And as the logic did thus grow,
The moment in its tick was born,
And as the logic being spread,
From void our baby space was torn.*

*And so the booming being grew,
From many ones, there came a slew,
Until the crowded point did scream,
And streaming matter as it blew.*

*We call it now our old Big Bang,
But no one heard the sound it threw,
For still the logic mind unborn
Ignored the Bang's roiling stew.*

*And Big it surely was not so,
A Planck length more or less,
Though there and then the world was that,
A point, I must confess.*

*In mighty microseconds grand,
The Universe baby grew,
Creating matter in its stead,
And photons, not a few.*

*And in this newly minted cosm
Expanded fire bloomed,
The laws of nature, its love, showed,
And ordered what's foredoomed.*

**So out of this did light come forth,
And dusty matter flew,
And atoms, many kinds did dress,
The empty vacuum new.**

**And in time so did matters rest,
radiation clouds recede,
A Universe is born of Light,
Declaring mighty Deed.**

*And in this mist of light and dust,
Galaxies gathered too,
As whirling dust its dance unfurled,
And circled center's dew.*

*And from Galactic dust did grow,
A star, a furnace glow,
Humungous sizes, proton stew,
the screaming, endless row.*

*In anger does the first born blow,
Creating Carbon, O and more,
And spreading dust in empty fields,
Not knowing what awaits, in store.*

*But second born is more congealed,
It gathers sibling's body's core,
It forms again, a fiery star,
That holds the essence lore.*

*And round this Sun, the rocks relate,
to start the endless game of fate,
they gather so the planets form,
and circle round in ages late.*

*And one such baby does arise,
In Goldilocks, its luck is great,
Its moon does keep it steady still,
And helps it in its blessed state.*

T'is not too hot, *T*'is not too cold,
And water comets does it hoard,
To form the oceans wide and blue,
To harbor yet another ward.

Magnetic fields its core bestows,
Protecting from the Solar storm,
Volcanoes crashing at the seams,
Bestow it Carbon, golden, warm.

So out of this still angry brew,
Does matter roil and mixes slew,
Until, perchance, a cell does form,
Declaring *L*ife, the old and new,

Thus *T*erra's born, our splendid *E*arth,
The mother of our minds,
The *U*niverse declares with joy,
*I*ts job is done, unwinds.

For out of chaos, matter's born,
And out of matter *L*ife is torn,
The *U*niverse a *M*ind has shone,
To know itself, no more forlorn.

We know of one, we know no more,
Perhaps a single act of luck,
This *E*arth, the one we dearly love,
*I*s one, the odds did buck.

The journey starts, the eons pass,
And cell divides, to many grew,
On Methane, diOxides it fed,

The burning ember's stew.

*And Oxygen did nature form,
To gather, slowly as it's born,
Till Cell, adjusted to the new,
Did bring about a brighter morn.*

*For from this Cell, many did grow,
And stuck together, clusters form,
With evolution came the race,
And Life was well, it was the norm.*

*From humble start, the mighty grew,
Ameobas built a mighty zoo,
From snail to toad, to monkeys grand,
Neanderthals, ancestors too.*

*And then along there comes a break,
A stroke of luck, a magic chance,
The Sapiens rise, and Man is born,
To think, to love, to Dance.*

*And there begins adventure new,
And Mind its future spread,
No longer whimsy chance begets,
The death and fear we dread.*

*The age of Man that dawned so late,
Has changed the rules of play,
For Logic now does have a tool,
To manage Nature's day.*

TRIBES

*And infant Man did roam the earth,
In struggles to survive,
For Darwin's law, supreme it reigns,
For Man as for Beehive.*

*So gather round, the tribes they grew,
The many strong, protecting few,
And in this kinship love did grow,
And knowledge born, of every hue.*

*But as the many tribes compete,
For Darwin's cause, they slay,
And anger came, and fights begun,
Led Man in Murder's way.*

*And Visigoth did fight the Hun,
For capture and for loot,
And Mayhem reigned, the bandit's way,
The loving voice is mute.*

*Yet in the valleys of the Nile,
And Tigres Delta's swell,
A calmer family convened,
A gentler tribe did dwell.*

*And they begot a culture grand,
With Hiero's, Stylus, Reed,
Their Ziggurats reached for the sky,
And so did grow the seed.*

**Thus civilizing Man was born,
To fight the nature urge,
To help each other in distress,
Their frailties to purge.**

**For Sumer, Egypt, bore the fruit,
That we enjoy yet, still,
Phoenicians added words to write,
And Indian's numbered bill**

**Maurading nations, many still,
Do gather for a storm,
Yet Mind's first light does glow still bright,
Despite the creeping worm.**

**And though the troubles gather forth,
We tackle them in haste,
We fight the fight, protect the wealth,
Life's worth not laid to waste.**

**For every Rubin, Elvis, Kepler flames,
With Shakespearean tune,
Declare the mighty works of Man,
Will suffer not the Dune.**

**So enemies of life, beware,
The road was long and hard,
And we will not give up the fight,
Will not undo the Start.**

**So gather soldiers of the *L*ight,
The *A*rmey of the book,
Defend the *T*reasures of the past,
Defend the *L*earned *R*ook.**

**For *T*'is one chance, one life we got,
One *P*lanet, *M*ind's rewards,
Defend the happy quirk of *F*ate,
That gave us such awards.**

HEROES

**Our story has too many threads,
To tell them, prose or rhyme,
But some Our Heroes' lives enshrine,
do stand the test of time.**

.

**Of Cadmus, legend be or true,
his alphabets abroad,
Or Hammurabi, ruler fine,
His laws a stony load.**

**A Jesus, sharing light and love,
A message for all time,
A message that shall never die,
While sung with loving rhyme.**

**Of Euclid and his figures' truth,
Of Socrates sublime,
Of Plato, and Aristotle,
Deployed in gentle clime.**

**Phoenecians in their mountain home,
And shores to roam and ride,
With Greeks they traded goods and thoughts,
And beauty could not hide.**

**Our heroes yet do not include,
The conquering hordes of fate,
For they just took, and never gave,
They just dispensed the hate.**

*Assyrian skulls, the Sun unleashed,
Barbarians at the Gate,
They ravaged land and beauty all,
And gave a mournful fate.*

*Renaissance did the mind awake,
Galileo dreamed with Scope,
Explored the Heavens and the Stars,
Awaking sleeping hope.*

*Michelangelo did the heavens draw,
And Donatello too,
No words we have can just describe,
The magic that they drew.*

*And Kepler and Copernicus,
Explored the solar realm,
And thought undid the myths of old,
That prejudice o'erwhelm.*

*And Newton saw his apple's muse,
Principia showed the way,
To see the stars for what they are,
From then until today.*

*And Maxwell did display the Light,
Electromagnetic stream,
Its speed compute, a faster beam,
Than anyone could dream.*

Then Einstein came to patch the laws,
While keeping good of old,
His Relative ingenuity,
Beyond what mind can hold.

With Planck he did the quantum show,
Its magic unresolved,
Uncertainty pervades the world,
And yet we have evolved.

With Feynman QED explained,
We know what happens 's real,
We can compute, we can explain,
The atom, and a great deal.

And in the human sphere we have,
The Ghandi's and the Kings,
Theresa, Mandela delight,
And all the heavens Sing.

The muck and slime we shall ignore,
Forgiveness is the way,
They taught us how to live and love,
To fight another day.

Our Heroes live in Mind and Lore,
Our angels of despair,
That made the trip all so worthwhile,
Through hard work and their Care.

EPILOGUE

Funny is the way of the world.

Perhaps it would be intolerable otherwise.

One of my favorite books, "Heroes in Hell", described Hell not as a hopeless place, but a place where Hope is raised only to be dashed, and therein lies the agony. A Hero is one who can thrive despite dashed Hopes and Dreams, who can enjoy the journey and not just the destination.

Finding purpose in a Purposeless world calls us to create the Purpose. It is not there to be found, but to be made, ex-Nihilo.

Create your Dream. Build Your purpose. And enjoy the Journey as you do, for we only pass through once, never to return.

Make your legacy a Dream for others. Your purpose a guiding light to posterity.

Only thus Immortality.

SUGGESTED READING & RESOURCES

For Interesting perspectives on modern science, religion, and psychology:

- Richard Dawkins – “Blind Watchmaker”, “The God Delusion”, or any of his books
- Dan Dennett- “Consciousness Explained”, or any of his books
- Don Lincoln – “Understanding the Universe”
- Richard Feynman’s “Surely you are Kidding, Mr Feynman”, and “What the Hell do You care what other people think”.
- Max Jammer on Space, Time and the Quantum Philosophy
- Frank Wilczek’s “Fantastic Realities - 49 Mind Journeys and A Trip to Stockholm”
- Einstein, “Relativity, the Special and General Theory”; “Physics and Reality”; “The World as I see it”.
- Jagdish Mehra, “Einstein and Reality”
- Darwing, “Origin of Species”
- Freeman Dyson, “Origins of Life”
- Moses Maimonides, “Guide for the Perplexed”
- Abraham Pais biographies, especially Einstein’s “Subtle is the Lord”
- Peter Rowland’s “Zero to Infinity”
- Steven Weinberg, “The First Three Minutes”
- George Gamow, “Thirty Years that Shook Physics”; Also Mr Tompkins’ adventures.
- Roger Penrose, “The Emperor’s New Mind”, “Shadows of Mind”, and the massive “Road to Reality”
- K Lang, “Sun, Earth and Sky”, “The Sun from Space”
- Polkinghorne, “Quantum Mechanics, a short introduction”
- James Lovelock, “Gaia”
- Ernst Mach, “The Science of Mechanics”
- Thomas Cathcart, Daniel Klein, “Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar” (very funny philosophical twists).

- Steven Hawking, "Brief History of Time", "The Grand Design" and "Universe in a Nutshell"
- Carl Sagan, "Cosmos"
- Francis Crick, "The Origin of the Genetic Code"
- James Watson, "The Double Helix"
- Michio Kaku, any of his books, "Physics of the Impossible", "Beyond Einstein" recommended
- Laurence Krauss, "The Physics of Star Trek", "A single Oxygen Atom's journey from the Big Bang to life on Earth... and beyond", "A Universe from Nothing", plus any of his easy reads.
- Lee Smolin, "The Trouble with Physics"
- Brian Greene, "The Elegant Universe" or any of his books.
- "Universe Today" website
- Martin Gardner, "Fads and Fallacies in Science"

Fun historical perspectives:

- Hendrik van Loon's "Story of Mankind"
- Henry Williams, editor, "Historians' History of the World", 25 volumes
- George Rawlinson's history tomes; "History of Phoenicia", History of "Herodotus", "Ancient History", "Ancient Egypt", "The five great monarchies of the ancient Eastern world."
- Herodotus, "The Histories"
- Ibn Khaldoun, "The Introduction"
- Edward Gibbon, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"
- Will Durant, "The Story of Civilization", and "The Story of Philosophy"
- Moscati, "The Phoenicians"

Great Masterpieces:

- Shakespeare anything, start with the Sonnets, and don't miss Hamlet
- Wordsworth anything
- Charles Dickens anything
- Milton's "Paradise Lost"
- Dante's "Divine Comedy"
- Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables"
- Cervantes' "Don Quixote"
- Homer's Iliad and Odyssey
- Virgil's Aeneid

- James Hilton's "Lost Horizon", for a trip to Shangrila.
- William Saroyan's "The Human Comedy"
- Omar Khayyam's "Rubaiyat"
- Spinoza's "Ethics"
- Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes" ... "Hound of the Baskervilles"
- Alexandre Dumas' "The Three Musketeers"
- Plato's "Republic", Dialogues and "Timaeus"
- Aristotle's "Organon", "Categories" and "Physics"
- St Augustine's "City of God"
- St Thomas Aquinas' "Complete Works"
- Einstein's "The World as I see it"
- H G Wells, "The Time Machine"
- Schroedinger's "What is Life"
- Isaac Asimov anything, especially his "Story of ..." series on various sciences.
- "Beowulf"
- Ghandi, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth"
- Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"
- Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe"
- Tolstoy's "War and Peace"
- Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer"
- Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol" and "Oliver Twist"
- Lao Tzu, "The Art of War"
- Machiavelli's "The Prince"
- Gibran Khalil Gibran, anything, especially "The Prophet".
- Bhagavad Gita, for Indian legend and Lore, turned religion
- Popul Vuh, Mayan "scriptures", just for fun and laughs
- Zend Avesta, for an idea of origins of the myths
- New Testament, for inspiration.
- Old Testament, for witness to uncomfortable truths.

For Reference material and a huge wealth of antiquity's (and modern) archives on the internet, try:

- Google Archive
- Gallica of France
- Gutenberg archive
- Archivx science treasures

Excellent References can be found in:

- Glencoe science series, High School level exposes of varied sciences
- The “Demystified”, “For Dummies” and “Complete Idiot Guides” to everything. You never knew Dummies and Idiots were so smart! Very readable and well produced.
- Schaum’s outlines, for the studious and scientifically inclined.
- Cliff Notes and Sparks Notes series, for those interested in classics, but have little time for the long versions.
- Dorling-Kindersley (DK) series, the BEST by far in terms of beautiful graphics supplementing excellent text.
- Frommers, Berlitz and Lonely Planet series, excellent tourist guides, and a great source on this world’s diversity.
- “Facts on File”, ABC-CLIO, Blackwell, CENGAGE, “A very Short Introduction” and Chelsea series, on many and variegated subjects.
- Osprey – Salamander series on our pre-dilections for war and military adventures – everything about warfare and weaponry from the dawn till now.
- The Teaching Company series
- Britannica Science Series
- USMLE & Lippincott series on all things medical
- Pimsleur series of books and CDs for language learning

Wikipedia <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

And when all else fails (in fact maybe before), there is the wonderful warehouse of the INTERNET. Google it!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam S. Abujawdeh was born in Lebanon in 1955. He is a native of Maska, a small town in the mountains of El Metn district.

After graduating from Brummana High School, and a short stint at the American University of Beirut, he left to the US for studies in Electrical and Nuclear Engineering at Syracuse University and the University of Cincinnati.

Sam has worked at General Electric, AT&T, and other companies in the US and worldwide, taking an early retirement in 2001. He currently contracts with AT&T and other companies in New Jersey, USA, where he lives with his wife and four Children.

